

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear CROSSTALK Editor,

In CROSSTALK's February issue, Ken Schwaber commented on my December article, titled "Agile Software Development for the Entire Project." I am in firm agreement with him theoretically and philosophically. However, the open water reality of working in agile software development brings home how difficult agile software can sometimes become. In both thought and practice, it requires us to be open and willing to change to keep up with *evolution*. After all, if there is one thing that agile processes tell us, it is to embrace change. Perhaps it requires more change of the traditional mindset than one of the organization.

As such, the agile community has been working diligently to best understand how various roles – such as test – *fit* into agile software development processes. If one has the opportunity to attend an agile conference, one notices entire tracks devoted to testing the *results* of agile processes. Indeed, most organizations end up integrating testing on their own, using a *Chinese menu approach* [Bob Martin, keynote Agile Conference 2005] where they mix and match various agile practices to construct their own processes.

Working with on-site customers is always our best-case scenario. The feedback is direct, constant, and immediate. Realistically, however, many projects cannot bring customers on-site for perfectly good reasons. After all, customers have jobs too. What do we say to those projects? You can't be agile? No, we shift a little and bring in roles to go to work with the customers on their site. Customer validation is an extremely important part of any real-world agile process.

This article demonstrates the need for a next generation (XP is already on version 2.0) of agile processes with ways of dealing with customers who cannot spend time on-site, larger agile projects, distributed projects, and/or the need for testing of the delivered systems on behalf of the customer. You can consider any one of these conditions a barrier to using some of

the first-generation processes. Of course, these new processes will have to continue to promote adaptive, self-managing teams in a team-oriented environment.

I wish to thank Mr. Schwaber for reading my article. I always appreciate his from-the-heart feedback. My goal is to strive to be true to agile methodology, while addressing the real-life ongoing, ever-changing, ever-evolving needs of our customers and our exciting industry.

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Dear CROSSTALK Editor,

I very much liked the BACKTALK column about software usability titled "Push for Cheese: A Metaphor for Software Usability" by Nicole Radziwell and Amy Shelton in the December 2005 issue of CROSSTALK. It was very thought-provoking. I frequently get annoyed at software in which it is either too hard or too easy to invoke a selection or option, and it results in something I did not intend. Your suggestions for how to overcome this problem were *right on*. It is very challenging to have a user community that (a) is very diverse in its opinions on what makes for good software usability and, (b) as they get more familiar with the software, their preferences on how it should work change.

Thank you for drawing visibility to this seemingly simple but in actuality very complex issue. Hopefully it will prevent problems such as operator-machine issues coming up right before going to final system test that should have been addressed much earlier in the development.

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